

The OPEN COURT

Devoted to the Science of Religion,
the Religion of Science, and the Extension
of the Religious Parliament Idea

FOUNDED BY EDWARD C. HEGELER

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Volume XLIV (No. 12)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>Frontispiece. Flyleaf in a Virgil Manuscript Formerly in the Library of Petrarch.</i>	
<i>Virgil.</i> ELIZABETH CARUS	705
<i>Ethics and Reality.</i> T. SWANN HARDING.....	712
<i>The Patterns of Philosophic Thought.</i> CLARENCE ERICKSON...	726
<i>The Englishman Who Became a Pope.</i> J. V. NASH.....	736
<i>The Use of the Word Jen in the Confucian Analects.</i> HUANG K'UEI and J. K. SHRYOCK.....	745
<i>The Devil, the World and the Flesh (Concluded).</i> MAXIMILIAN RUDWIN	751
<i>The Self (Poem).</i> CHARLES EUGENE BANKS.....	767

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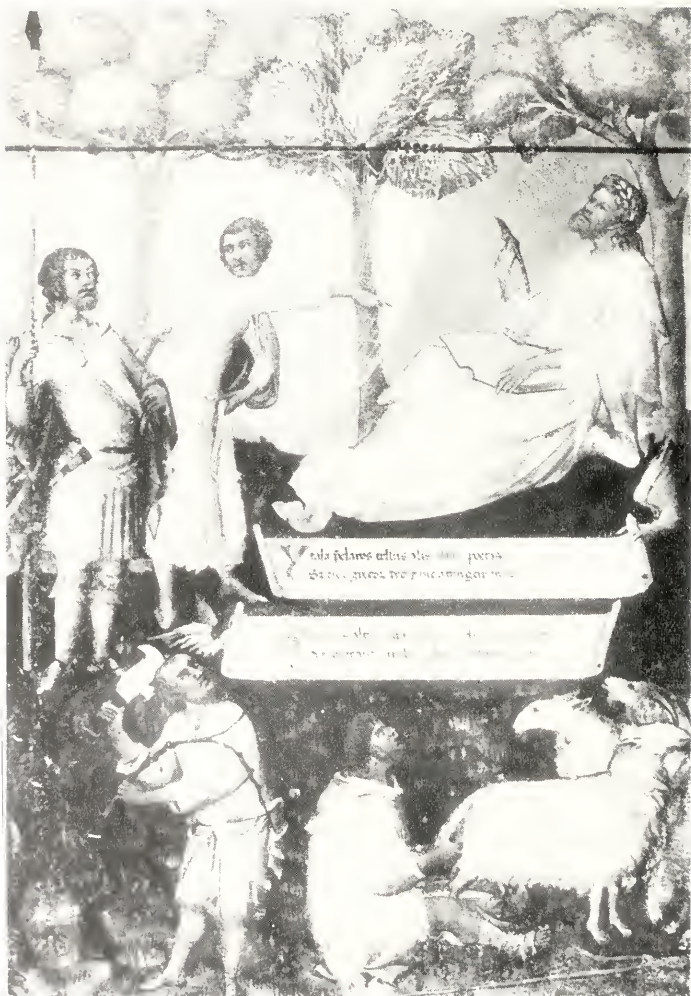
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INDEX TO VOLUME XLIV

ARTICLES AND AUTHORS

American Man, The Origins of. Lewis Spence.....	342
Asceticism, The Pleasant Pains of. Leo Markun.....	564
Asmodeus, Dandy Among Demons. Maximilian Rudwin.....	459
Astronomy, Modern, and the New Cosmos. J. V. Nash.....	257
Bailey, William S. Socrates Tries City Management.....	411
Banks, Charles Eugene. The Self.....	767
Berman, Harold. Inertia and Faith, 118; Opposition Versus Indifference.....	699
Brown, Lawrence Parmly. The Cosmic Teeth.....	1, 73, 162, 232
Cajori, F. Newton's Idea of God as Found in the Different Editions of His Principia	65
Cajori, Florian. In Memoriam.....	640
Carus, Elizabeth. Virgil	705
Character Training, In Promotion of. Edward L. Schaub.....	449
Clarke, William F. Spirit, Eternal Life, Immortality.....	129
Confucian Analects, The Use of the Word Jen in the. Huang K'uei and J. K. Shryock.....	745
Cosmos, Modern Astronomy and the New. J. V. Nash.....	257
Demons, The Loves of the. Maximilian Rudwin.....	599
Devil, The Belief in the. Maxmilian Rudwin.....	153
Devil, The World and the Flesh. Maxmilian Rudwin.....	678
Devil's Death, The. Maximilian J. Rudwin.....	208
Devil-Compact in Tradition and Belief, The. Maximilian Rudwin.....	293, 321, 419
Devil, The World and the Flesh. Maxmilian Rudwin.....	678, 751
293, 321, 419; The Devil, The World and the Flesh, 678, 751; The Devil's Death, 208; The Legend of Lilith, 513; The Loves of the Demons, 599; The War for the World.....	84
Einstein, Poe and. George Nordstedt.....	173
El Dorado. Lloyd Morris.....	669

Emil, Oskar, The Strategy of Life and Humanism, 571; The World.....	187
Englishman Who Became a Pope. J. V. Nash.....	736
Epicureanism, Will Skepticism Tend Toward. John Heintz.....	181
Erickson, Clarence. The Patterns of Philosophic Thought.....	657
Erickson of the Sagas, Leif. Cornelia Steketee Hulst.....	272
Ethics and Reality. T. Swann Harding.....	712
Fletcher, Frances. Henry D. Thoreau, Oriental.....	510
Freedom, Science and. Jacob Kunz.....	399
Goodspeed, Thomas W., "A Yankee Saint." J. V. Nash.....	385
Harding, T. Swann. Limitations of Science as a System of Belief, 577; How Can You Help Believing?.....	279
Harding, T. Swann. Ethics and Reality.....	712
Heintz, John. Tschaikevsky's Black Beast, 614; Will Skepticism Tend Toward Epicureanism?	181
Hindu Spirituality In Religion and Drama. Gregory Vlastos.....	137
How Can You Help Believing? T. Swann Harding.....	279
Huang Kuei Yuen and J. K. Shryock. The Use of the Word Tao in the Confucian Analects.....	489
Huang K'uei. The Use of the Word Jen in the Confucian Analects.....	745
Hulst, Cornelia Steketee. Leif Erickson of the Sagas.....	193, 272
Humanism, Positivism and. Edwin H. Wilson.....	21
Humanist Trends in Modern Religious Developments. Curtis W. Reese...	647
Indian Philosophy in its Divergence from the Spirit of the Contemporary West. Edward L. Schaub	522, 586
India's Contribution to Religion and its Effect on International Relations. S. C. Pandit.....	123
Inertia and Faith. Harold Berman.....	118
Insanity Unsocial, Is? George Yeisley Rusk.....	244
Jen in the Confucian Analects, The Use of the Word. Huang K'uei and J. K. Shryock.....	745
Jesus and Jewish Tradition. Robert P. Richardson.....	546
Jones, W. Tudor. Natural Objects and Ideal Objects.....	100
Kunz, Jacob. Science and Freedom.....	399
Lean Cattle (Poem). Charles Sloan Reid.....	704
Leif Erickson of the Sagas. Cornelia Steketee Hulst.....	193
Life on Other Worlds, The. William Alphonso Murrill.....	446
Lilith, The Legend of. Maximilian Rudwin.....	513
Limitations of Science as a System of Belief. T. Swann Harding.....	577
Markun, Leo. The Pleasant Pains of Asceticism, 564; The Pleasant Pains of Martyrdom	359
Martyrdom, The Pleasant Pains of. Leo Markun.....	359
McTaggart, Dr., The Philosophy of. Gilbert T. Sadler.....	58
Morality, Problems of the New. Victor S. Yarros.....	382

Morris, Lloyd. El Dorado, 669; The Livery of Proteus, 316; Occidental Martha	620
Mukerjee, Radhakamal. The Insights and Raptures of the Mystic....	438, 502
Murrill, William Alphonso. The Life on Other Worlds.....	446
Mystic, The Insights and Raptures of the. Radhakamal Mukerjee....	438, 502
Nash, J. V. Carl Sandburg: An American Homer, 633; Modern Astronomy and the New Cosmos, 257; Thomas W. Goodspeed: "A Yankee Saint".....	385
The Englishman Who Became a Pope.....	736
Natural Objects and Ideal Objects. W. Tudor Jones.....	100
Newton's Idea of God as Found in the Different Editions of his Principia. F. Cajori	65
Nordstedt, George. Poe and Einstein.....	173
Occidental Martha. Lloyd Morris.....	620
Opposition Versus Indifference. Harold Berman.....	699
Pandit, S. G. India's Contribution to Religion and Its Effect on International Relations	123
Patterns of Philosophic Thought. Clarence Erickson.....	726
Paul, Alias Simon the Magician. Robert P. Richardson.....	467
Philosophic Thought, The Patterns of. Clarence Erickson.....	657
Philosophic Works, Two Notable. Victor S. Yarros.....	496
Pluralism, Life and "Value." Victor S. Yarros.....	252
Poe and Einstein. George Nordstedt.....	173
Pope, The Englishman Who Became a Pope. J. V. Nash.....	736
Positivism and Humanism. Edwin H. Wilson.....	21
Prayer (Poem). Charles Sloan Reid.....	192
Proteus, The Livery of. Lloyd Morris.....	316
Reese, Curtis W. Humanist Trends in Modern Religious Developments....	647
Regression, The Law of, in Religion and Morals. Victor S. Yarros.....	690
Reid, Charles Sloan. Lean Cattle (Poem), 704; Prayer (Poem).....	192
Religion Always Comes Back. William H. Roberts.....	48
Religion and Morals, The Law of Regression in. Victor S. Yarros.....	690
Religion and the Future of India. Daljit Singh Sadharia.....	214
Religion, The Art of. S. I. Rosenberg.....	532
Religion, From Modern Physics to. Victor S. Yarros.....	37
Religious Development, Suggestions for a Theory of. A. K. Sharma.....	304, 369
Richardson, Robert P. Jesus and Jewish Tradition, 546; Paul, Alias Simon the Magician.....	467
Roberts, William H. Religion Always Comes Back.....	48
Rosenberg, S. I. The Art of Religion.....	532
Rudwin, Maximilian. Asmodeus, Dandy Among Demons, 459; The Belief in the Devil, 153; The Devil-Compact in Tradition and Belief, 293, 321, 419; The Devil, The World and the Flesh, 678, 751; The Devil's Death, 208; The Legend of Lilith, 513; The Loves of the Demons, 599; The War for the World.....	84
Rusk, George Yeisley. Is Insanity Unsocial?.....	244
Sadharia, Daljit Singh. Religion and the Future of India.....	214
Sadler, Gilbert T. The Philosophy of Dr. McTaggart.....	58

Sandburg, Carl: An American Homer. J. V. Nash.....	633
Schaub, Edward L. In Promotion of Character Training, 449; Indian Philosophy in its Divergence from the Spirit of the Contemporary West	522, 586
Science and Freedom. Jacob Kunz.....	399
Science, Limitations of, as a System of Belief. T. Swann Harding.....	577
Self, The. (Poem) Charles Eugene Banks.....	767
Sharma, A. K. Suggestions for a Theory of Religious Development.....	304, 369
Shryock, J. K. and Huang Kuei Yuen. The Use of the Word Tao in the Confucian Analects	489
Shryock, J. K. The Use of the Word Jen in the Confucian Analects.....	745
Skepticism Tend Toward Epicureanism, Will. John Heintz.....	181
Socrates Tries City Management. William S. Bailey.....	411
Spence, Lewis. The Origins of American Man.....	342
Spirit, Eternal Life, Immortality. William F. Clarke.....	129
Steffen, August. Universal Unity.....	109
Strategy of Life and Humanism, The. Oskar Emil.....	571
Tao in the Confucian Analects, The Use of the Word. Huang Kuei Yuen and J. K. Shryock.....	489
Teeth, The Cosmic. Lawrence Parmly Brown.....	1, 73, 162, 232
Thoreau, Henry D. Oriental. Oriental. Frances Fletcher.....	510
Tschaikovsky's Black Beast. John Heintz.....	641
Universal Unity. August Steffen	109
Virgil. Elizabeth Carus	705
Vlastos, Gregory. Hindu Spirituality in Religion and Drama.....	137
War for the World, The. Maxmilian J. Rudwin.....	84
Wilson, Edwin H. Positivism and Humanism.....	21
World, The. Oskar Emil.....	187
Yarros, Victor S. From Modern Physics to Religion, 37; The Law of Regression in Religion and Morals, 690; Pluralism, Life and "Value," 252; Problems of the New Morality. 382; Two Notable Philosophic Works	496

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Volume XLIV (No. 12) DECEMBER, 1930 Number 895

VIRGIL

Publius Vergilius Maro, 70-19 B. C.

BY ELIZABETH CARUS

THIS year marks the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Virgil and it is being noted by exhibitions and commentaries on his accomplishments and his influence through these twenty centuries. He gave to Italy, then devastated by civil war, bankrupt and depopulated, the spiritual force and the creative impulse which made it possible for her to establish herself as a unified whole, and it is his interpretation of it which has become a part of our world thought. Augustus was the founder of the political ideal of the Holy Roman Empire; Virgil, the poet of Italy, was the inspired authority thereof who kept alive the nobler conception of sovereignty.

Virgil is famous for three main volumes of poetry, the Eclogues, a group of pastoral poems, the Georgics, which praise the simple life and labor, and the Aeneid, an epic of the Roman nation.

Virgil was born in 70 B. C. near Mantua. At the time of his birth Italy was absorbed by the struggle for supremacy between Rome and the provinces. He received a very thorough education first at Cremona and the University of Milan, later at Rome. We know little of the following years except that his travels must have brought him over all Italy for in his poems he shows an intimate knowledge of the country from the Alps to the straits. (Virgil was living in the country). In 42 B. C. when the general confiscation of land took place, Virgil was living in the country, and in the Eclogues he gives a vivid account of the confiscation of

his father's farm. Later through influential friends the farm was restored.

The Eclogues, begun in the country, were finished at Rome. For some time before their publication Virgil was one of a group of close friends who had in common a vision of new possibilities and a new meaning for poetry. The poetry then in vogue was of the stilted, scholastic Alexandrian school which could not develop any further. This group, which included the poets, Gallus, Varius, and Macer, produced a large amount of poetry. With the appearance of the Eclogues, Virgil became the leader of the movement, now known as Virgilism. His fame and influence were immediate. The new poetry in Greek literary forms, with simple musical rhythms, was not perfect in workmanship, but it was free and it was alive. In the Eclogues, as in all the writings of Virgil, there is a mystic and a prophetic note foretelling a Golden Age about to be realized. He is under the spell of the greatness of Rome, yet he is Italian in spirit and has that great quality of expressing the yearning of the soul in its deeper moods.

The promises of the Eclogues are treated as actual facts in the Georgics, which were inspired by his friend Maecenas. In those days the influence of a poet in moulding public opinion was very great. Italy was economically exhausted and needed men to develop her unused wealth which lay idle in virgin soil, forest and swamp. Virgil sought to awaken a new interest in the land with the little touches of genius which make poetry of everyday tasks, he transfigured the simple hard life of the farmer and idealized agriculture and industry, making the Georgics the most perfect poems of native Italian life.

Shortly before the Georgics were finished Octavius was made supreme and the unification of Italy was complete. To celebrate this event Virgil started the Aeneid which became the complete expression of his profound thought and his philosophy of life, his dreams and his ideals. After eleven years, in 19 B. C. the epic was finished, and in order to perfect it Virgil visited Greece. He had planned to stay three years, but he met Augustus in Athens, and returned with him the same year. At Megara, where they stopped on the voyage, Virgil was taken sick. They hurried home. Virgil died a few days after reaching Brundisium and was buried at Naples, where his tomb was, for a long time, held in religious veneration.

GIOVANNI FABRINI DA FIGHINE.

Sopra il Quinto Libro de l'Eneide di Virgilio.



INTEREA mediū Aeneas,
&c.) Mentre che Didone si sepelliva, & si piagnu-
ua; Enea etagia nel mezzo
del mare per andare in Ita-
lia. Et voltandosi indietro,
vide che tutta Cartagine si
splendeva di fiamme di fuo-
co, e non sapeva la cagione.

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grammaticali.*

Con questo principio di Libro Virgilio accorza secon lo
la sua vianza il quarto libro, la maggior parte del quale egli
ha tolto di Homero. Perche tutte le cose ch'egli racconta

INTEREA mediū Aeneas iam clasſe tenebat
Certus itor: studiūq; arcos Aquilone secabat,
Mœnia respiciens, quæ iam infœdatis cœcis
Collucent flammis, quæ tantum accenderit ignem
Carſa Læter: auri magno ſcintillare domos
Polito, notumq; furens quæ ſumma poſſit,
I riſſe per augurium Teneoronum pectora ducunt.

noi diciamo, che egli navigò intorno al primo nascento
del giorno. E però il Dile,

*Prælia è specula, et primum albescere lucem,
Vult et æquari classem proceræ re vela.*

Adunque in tutto quel giorno che Didone si ammarzò, e si
piagnu, fece poco progresso in mare, tirando piano e venti
e intor-

qui si fanno intorno alla fe-
lissima di Patroclo. E ben
vero che quivi Homero in-
troda persone che atteg-
giano con le Carrette, & Vir-
gilio qu. fa fare una guerra
nautica. Et è da sapere, che
non poteva esserle, che in via
di intor. Tenei attuale in
Scitia, però bisogna che

By the command of Augustus, Virgil's request to have the *Aeneid* destroyed was overruled. Instead Virgil was given divine honors and the *Aeneid* was regarded as an inspired writing to be consulted for omens of the future of the empire and its rulers.

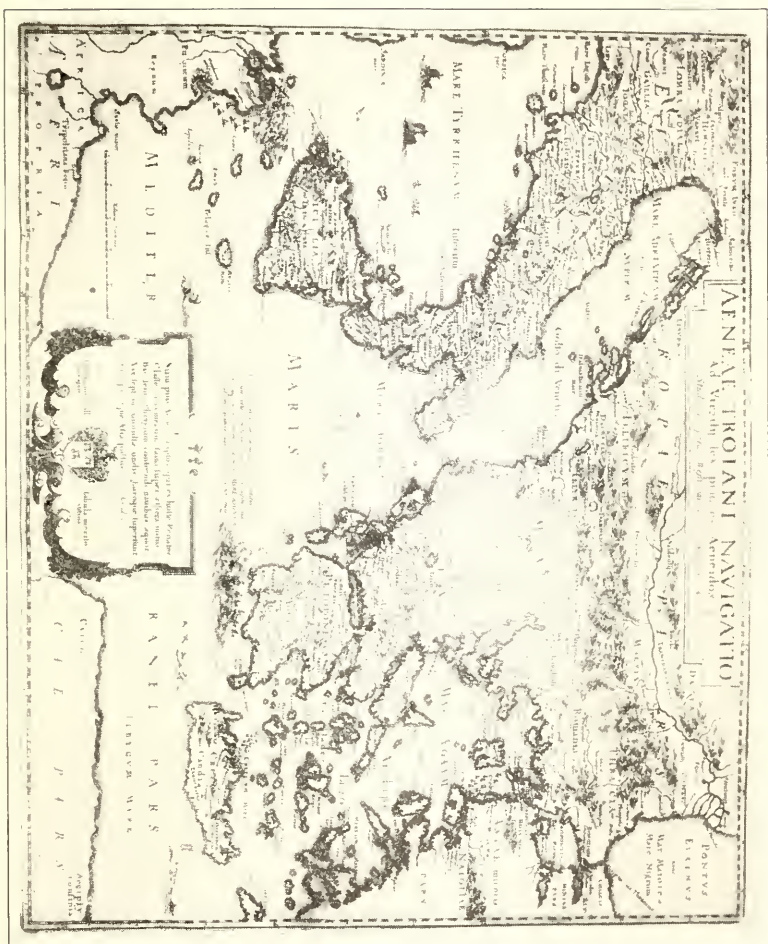
The dominant idea of the *Aeneid* is that of an universal empire founded by divine decree, and glorifying not only Rome, but all of Italy. Virgil tried to fuse into a homogeneous whole a Latin *Iliad*, an annalistic epic of the nation, and the celebration of the struggles and triumphs of his own age. This task was one of supreme difficulty and many times in periods of depression he thought it hopeless. He wanted to make his epic a guiding force to the whole Latin world.

The main part of the story describes the founding and establishing of Rome by Aeneas, the highest point of which is reached when he sails up the Tiber and lands on the spot which is to become Rome. To this theme Virgil adds the seven years of wandering from Troy and the love story of Dido and Aeneas, which became one of such enthralling interest that it almost absorbed the whole action of the poem, but Virgil's transcendental vision draws the two themes together and unifies them. Aeneas is taken into the underworld and undergoes an experience similar to conversion. One sees in a fourth dimensional view the past and the future side by side where one senses the ultimate secret of the universe and its creative processes. The picture is one of haunting impressions and of the eternal search into the unknown.

The greatest criticism of the poem has been concerning the pious character of Aeneas, who is not human in that he never thinks of his own desires or gains; to Virgil, however, he was a religious ideal, guided by a higher power, the founder of the empire and the idea of divine sovereignty.

Virgil tried to include all the knowledge and riches of the world in the *Aeneid*. To the simple Homeric structure he added the refinements of later Greek poetry, the high ornamentation of Alexandrian verse, and the new romantic motives which made him the source of romanticism for later ages. We are just now beginning to appreciate the poem as a treasury of Italian antiques, for it records the geography and ethnography of ancient Italy, the religious practices, the social life and civic institutions of the time.

Except for the glorification of Augustus, Virgil kept clear of



A MAP SHOWING THE WANDERINGS OF AENEAS

partisan passions, and he could thus idealize the monarchy sincerely. He was the voice of Rome and the interpreter of its part in the history of the world. From this time the state was bound up with the sanctions of religion, as is shown by the title *Augustus*, which means the venerable with both a political and a religious significance. Throughout the empire the idea of a universal religion was developing, one main feature of which was that a Saviour would come who would establish peace on earth and a kingdom of righteousness. In the fourth *Eclogue* Virgil prophesies the birth of a child who would fulfill these expectations. Because of these Christian sentiments, even though they were expressed entirely in pagan terms, and because they expressed the very foundations upon which Christianity was based, the church recognized Virgil, and believed him to be inspired by God.

The *Aeneid* was never forgotten as were the classics of Greece. It was read and memorized and made the basis of education. It was the lay bible of the middle ages, the inspiration of poets. Virgil, himself was called *The Poet*. His name became a tradition to which were ascribed the qualities of a magician, and which had nothing in common with the original character of the poet. This legendary Virgil is said to have built a castle from which the emperor could see and hear all that was done and said in Rome; he made a lamp which lighted the whole city, and many other marvelous things. The same kind of stories, often the same ones, are ascribed to Aristotle and other ancient celebrities. The fact that he became the center of these legends shows how widespread was his fame and his influence.

After Virgil's death an endless literature began to grow up about him, and it still continues to grow. The first good commentary on his work was produced in Syria and the best portrait preserved of him is in fine mosaic, found at Tunis near the site of the ancient city of Carthage where Aeneas had been seen a thousand years earlier.

The following tabulation of the number of editions of his works and the languages in which they are printed is given by the Union Catalogue in the Library of Congress.

EDITIONS OF VIRGIL IN THE UNITED STATES

A recent survey of the Virgil material in the United States carried on by Project "B," Library of Congress, sheds much light on the prevalence of this favorite classic in American libraries. It is a surprising fact that upon a single appeal made by the Chairman of the Bimillennium Committee, 98 libraries responded to the call and supplied data for their holdings. The request for material was limited to editions other than school texts, and to a certain date, so that it may be assumed that the figures quoted represent minimums rather than maximums.

The tabulation attached hereto shows in detail the distribution of the editions of Virgil and discloses the fact that the student by means of Union Catalogs of the Library of Congress, is enabled to locate copies of Virgil proper, either complete works or individual parts, within the territory of the United States, exclusive of all works about Virgil. •

Of these 2145 represent individual editions (entries in Union Catalogs) which again are supplemented by additional 1554 locations, so that about every other edition listed in Union Catalogs is represented in two or more libraries.

Neither the works relating to Virgil, the travesties, nor the legends, are included in this tabulation. These, in themselves, form an additional catalog of no mean size.

Nor does the scholar of a foreign country, wishing to pursue studies in his own language, have to forego this privilege, since the survey shows that almost all of the principal languages are well represented in the Union Catalog as follows:

Polyglot	4	Gascon	2	Norwegian	1
Catalan	1	Greek	10	Portuguese	16
Danish	4	Hebrew	1	Scotch	3
Dutch	12	Hungarian	1	Spanish	37
Esperanto	2	Irish	1	Swedish	6
Gaelic	1	Italian	137	Russian	3

EDITIONS OF VIRGIL IN THE UNITED STATES

Vergilius Maro, Publius.	Total editions	In more than one library.
Latin texts:		
Works	846	692
Aeneid	179	103
Bucolics & Georgics	54	40
Bucolics	81	34
Georgics	80	56
Total (except *)	1,240	925
*Minor works	44	48
English texts:		
Works	164	156
Aeneid	219	230
Bucolics & Georgics	17	13
Bucolics	52	20
Georgics	35	56
Total	487	475
French texts	105	23
German texts	85	21
All other languages	184	62
Total	2,145	1,554